

# PROMOTING LIBRARIAN-FACULTY COLLABORATION TO ADVANCE INFORMATION LITERACY: HANOVER COLLEGE'S PILOT PROGRAM

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2005, a team from Hanover College (Academic Dean, Library Director, Faculty member) took part in *Transformation of the College Library*, a workshop offered by The Council of Independent Colleges. The focus of the meeting, advancing Information Literacy, culminated in participating institutions outlining an actionable plan for implementing/improving these important standards on their campus. As a result, the Duggan Library at Hanover College formed a year-long pilot program designed to support faculty wishing to incorporate information literacy concepts into their courses. During the Winter term of 2006, the Library completed a series of classes with topics ranging from research assignment development, to plagiarism and web technology. The remainder of the pilot program includes a session on evaluation followed by a campus-wide forum in January 2007 as Hanover considers the next steps in the Information Literacy initiative.

## ENVISIONING

In 2002, Hanover College, the state's oldest private liberal arts college, approved a new *Academic Vision Plan* resulting in sweeping curricular changes to better address student learning in the twenty-first century. The entering class of 2004 was the first to enroll under the new curriculum that, among other things, contains an *August Experience* for first-year students, and replaced *General Degree Requirements* (GDRs) with *Liberal Art Degree Requirements* (LADRs) emphasizing interdisciplinary studies.

Prior to this change, librarians (faculty status, non-tenure track positions) of the Hanover College Duggan Library offered typical academic bibliographic instruction (BI) classes to students through the bequest of the faculty. This included an informal agreement to hold sessions for all sections of the GDR course, English 112 (*Strategies*), in an effort to consistently reach most freshman-level students with introductory research skills. A review of recent statistics show that the results of this course of action varied quantitatively, though no recent data beyond anecdotal evidence spoke to the quality of library instruction with respect to learning

outcomes. While students often indicated instruction was beneficial, especially those tied to specific assignments, some were frustrated at having to attend additional session(s) as required by other courses which they believed simply repeated earlier instruction.

With the new Vision Plan enacted, the library, although recognized as an important component of the college's educational mission, had to consider new instructional methods in order to remain relevant to students and their academic research needs in an information-rich environment. Concomitantly, the library was charged by the Academic Dean to begin the process of developing a mid- to long-range plan, to include services, resources, and facility. Having recently undergone a partial renovation and a reclassification of the collections from Dewey to Library of Congress Classification System, along with major initiatives of two of our consortia, PALNI (Private Academic Library Network of Indiana) and A.L.I. (Academic Libraries of Indiana), we began looking for opportunities as a guide for moving forward in the ongoing sea of change.

Given these multiple factors, with curricular and instructional support paramount, one program that stood out was a three day workshop, *Transformation of the College Library*, offered by the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) and the National Institute for Technology and Liberal Education (NITLE). Offering three regional workshops aimed at small and mid-sized colleges and universities, the stated goal is for each participating institution to begin developing an agenda for advancing information literacy within a holistic framework. One of the unique and most valuable aspects of the CIC/NITLE offering is the requirement that each three-member institutional team must be comprised of the chief academic officer (Academic Dean) and the library director, with the third person being a recognized campus leader (in our case, a faculty member from the English Department who was a major figure in helping to shape Hanover College's Academic Vision as well as a current member of the Library Advisory Group). Encouraged by the program's institutional team approach, previous track record, competitive application process, and diversity of issues consid-

ered (with information literacy as the common denominator), Hanover College submitted a proposal in May 2005, and was accepted for the September 2005 meeting.

Prior to the meeting we completed an online survey depicting the current status of information literacy on our campus and divided the recommended readings among the three-member team. Suggested readings ranged from broad topics (academic libraries in the twenty-first century) to the more focused, such as integrating information literacy into the curriculum, assessing information literacy, and use of the physical space of the library building. The shared five hour drive from Hanover to Chicago allowed for discussion of information literacy concepts and its potential for our campus. More importantly, it was a time of team-building before arriving for the workshop.

The three-day meeting included teams from twenty-eight other institutions and was comprised of presentations, cross-institutional, and institutional team group discussions culminating with participants outlining an actionable plan for implementing and/or improving an information literacy program at their campus. Formal workshop presentations included topics such as collaboration among librarians and information technology (IT) staff, supporting information literacy through institutional policies, use of learning outcomes to measure effectiveness of an information literacy program, effecting change on campus, designing library spaces for information literacy activities, and budgeting for collections supporting such a teaching environment.

## PLANNING

Two planning sessions allowed team members to work together, as well as with other institution members to develop strategies and ultimately outline a plan of action for integrating information literacy concepts. Working cross-institutionally in the first session, attendees considered questions such as, "How might chief academic officers be involved in information literacy program planning?" and "What are the key ingredients needed to build collaborative relationships among faculty, librarians, and information technology staff?" These prompts allowed individuals to share common experiences, discuss various impediments, and begin brainstorming. The cross-institutional component was fundamental in encouraging open communication and allowing for multiple perspectives (institutional and individual) to be considered. The opportunity to exchange ideas and work alongside other library directors, academic deans, information technology staff, and faculty within the context of improving library services, was both a valuable and affirming experience.

In the second planning session, each institutional team worked independently in considering a program

rationale that reflected campus needs. Teams were asked to identify existing strengths and resources, discuss potential barriers to change, and suggest a time line for implementation. As a result of the cumulative presentations and sessions, the Hanover College team developed a working plan for formally implementing an information literacy plan.

The first piece of the plan was to define information literacy for our institution which led to the following: *Information literacy is thinking critically and ethically about information and constructing and presenting an argument for an audience.* With this in place we were able to describe both our mission and outcomes as they related to information literacy. Part of that mission statement included creating critical thinkers and lifelong learners through mindful use of new technologies and resources. Outcomes centered on students' ability construct a thorough and scholarly bibliography and literature review in their major.

Some of the positive forces identified for effecting change on our campus included our recently implemented Hanover Academic Vision, with its integrated writing and speaking requirement, library liaisons to interdisciplinary first-year courses, and the Independent Study which is the culminating scholarly experience for many Hanover College students. Potential obstacles to timely implementation centered on the many changes that have recently occurred on campus, a general "press for time", and a certain degree of separation between IT staff, and the library and faculty.

In designing the details of our own program, team members were naturally eager and optimistic, though the goal was to refine and operationalize information literacy on campus through a reasonable timeline, and with an eye for the long haul. The "plan" as developed at the workshop included integrating information literacy into the curricula, gateway and methods courses in the major, and the senior Independent Study through collaboration of the library, faculty, IT, and chief academic officer. Ideas for making this happen settled on offering faculty presentations and a summer workshop, conducting student focus groups, encouraging peer faculty instructors (via release time), promoting librarians as consultants, and grant exploration. In retrospect, perhaps all of this was a bit too ambitious from the outset, but at least a context had been established for addressing information literacy in a more systematic manner.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Soon upon returning to campus, team members had a working lunch to further strategize. We confirmed our charge (understanding that we needed to direct limited resources in a focused way) and it was decided that the academic dean would make an an-

nouncement at the next faculty meeting describing the purpose and intent of the workshop plan. Additionally, the library director would meet with the Library Advisory Group and librarians to formulate specifics. The Library Advisory Group (composed of the library director and four faculty members) advocated a faculty buy-in approach whereby librarians would offer an information literacy program to the faculty in the vein of “train the trainer”. Their advice was to offer “nuts and bolts” sessions with an expectation of continuity that would allow attendees to begin using information immediately and have a base of ongoing support. Discussion among the librarians centered on the types of sessions that should be offered, and by whom. All librarians were quick to jump on board, recognizing the value of a proactive approach in planting seeds and fostering partnerships with faculty. Collectively, each of these steps led to the formation of a year-long pilot program designed to support faculty wishing to incorporate information literacy concepts into their curricula.

In discussing potential topics for workshops, librarians quickly agreed on a set of recurring issues that could be addressed. Among these were academic honesty, effective use of resources, crafting manageable and effective assignments, use of technology in the classroom, and assessment. Research preparation to design the pilot program included a review of the existing literature and other institutions’ library instruction websites for best practices on educating faculty about information literacy.

Five fifty-minute workshops were developed, with each librarian taking the lead on one. All workshops included time for introductory comments describing the Association of College and Research Libraries standards, presentation material, and discussion. Workshops were limited to eight attendees to allow for productive discussion and collaboration. PowerPoint slides were presented and handouts were distributed during the workshops, along with a detailed list of information literacy outcomes for lower- and upper-class students.

An initial series of three workshops were offered in January 2006:

**Research Skills and Academic Honesty: Information Literacy as a Means to Combat Plagiarism.** Participants discussed how a course or assignment based on and incorporating information literacy principles reduces student opportunity and motivation for cheating. The workshop focused on preventative strategies and engaging students in discussions about academic honesty, with a lesser emphasis on detecting plagiarism.

**Creating Effective Research Assignments.** Attendees discussed how to structure research

assignments to avoid some of the common frustrations students experience in the library. Faculty were asked to bring along copies of current assignments to collaborate with a librarian in this hands-on session.

**Alternatives to the Traditional Research Paper.** Faculty discussed how library research, information literacy, and critical thinking skills can be taught outside of the confines of the traditional research paper in a variety of ways. This session offered a multitude of alternative assignment ideas and how they can be incorporated into existing courses. Attendees were asked to bring along their own favorite alternative assignment ideas to share.

The presenting librarians conducted follow-up consultations with attendees during February and March to allow faculty members to share ideas, ask questions pertaining to incorporating workshop material into upcoming courses, receive instructional support relevant to specific resources presented, or to discuss any other issues regarding information literacy and assignments.

New and returning workshop participants were invited to attend another workshop in April based on the use of “technology tools” to aid in implementing information literacy:

**Turning Techno-Savvy into Info-Savvy: Integrating Information Literacy into the Classroom.** Faculty discussed how students use technology, their learning expectations, and how faculty can use technology to help students develop good information gathering and critical thinking skills, and further engage them in course content. Topics covered included blogs, wikis, RSS, course web pages, PowerPoint, MyCampus classroom collaboration software, and SFX open-linking technology.

In response to faculty interest, all four workshops were repeated in May 2006. The first workshop series had a total attendance of thirty-one. Sixteen individual faculty across all divisions participated, which represented about 14% of the total faculty. Of those sixteen participants, seven attended two or more workshops in the series. The majority of those participating were faculty who have not been active participants in our library instruction program.

## FEEDBACK AND FUTURE

Participant feedback has been very positive. Several of the faculty participants expressed appreciation for the library’s outreach to them. The timing of the workshop series turned out to be ideal, as most of the faculty attending were in the process of developing new courses and related assignments for the Academic Vision curriculum. Although the library’s goal had been

for faculty to use workshop material to prepare for courses in the academic year 2006-2007, a number of the faculty adopted material immediately. Faculty members in theatre and political science used workshop material to adapt current assignments during the Winter term, and additional faculty began offering newly-crafted assignments during the one-month Spring term. Members of the sociology and modern languages faculty presented material from the academic honesty session to their classes in Winter term. One faculty member in philosophy expressed gratitude for the technology workshop, as it allowed her "to get back on the same page" with her students, and indicated that she would like to see similar workshops offered again as technology changes. Many faculty expressed their hope that the workshops would be repeated and new workshops be offered in the future.

In August 2006, a follow-up workshop, **Evaluating Information Literacy**, will be held for faculty who have attended any of the previous workshops. Faculty and librarians will evaluate the progress since the January/April workshops. Participants will learn how other faculty are incorporating the workshop material into classes and assignments and will discuss methods for assessing whether the new assignments are effective, and how to evaluate students' information literacy and research skills.

Formal assessment of incorporating information literacy into the curriculum will be done by faculty and librarians at the end of fall term 2006 for presentation at a January open forum. All interested faculty will be invited to hear librarians and participating faculty present updates about the pilot program and discuss what we have done, what we have learned, and where we go from here. At this time, we hope to begin planning for programs that will allow us to introduce information literacy to the student community, both directly from the library and in collaboration with student support offices.

## REFERENCES

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## RESOURCES

- CIC website: [http://www.cic.edu/conferences\\_events/workshop/library/2005/index.asp](http://www.cic.edu/conferences_events/workshop/library/2005/index.asp)
- ACRL Information Literacy Standards: <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/informationliteracycompetency.htm>
- Duggan Library Information Literacy Workshops site: [http://www.hanover.edu/Libr\\_ary/infolit.html](http://www.hanover.edu/Libr_ary/infolit.html)

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*In brief, the expanded information base is going to require that librarians retain the old skills—and thus the traditional education—and to acquire deeper knowledge of our specialized subject, new sophistication in information systems, and greater skills as managers. ...Moreover, librarians must acquire skills and must constantly refine them throughout their professional skills.*

Govan, James F. (1987, Summer). Fluidity and intangibility: The stunning impact of the expanded information base. *Journal of Library Administration* 8, 15-25.